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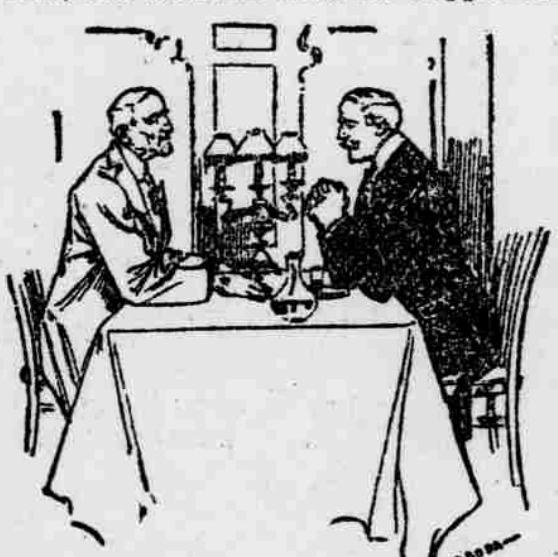
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Jane Cable

...By...
GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON,
Author of "Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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(Continued.)
The unexpected arrival of his son and party had disturbed his usual coolness, but with his order for supper his



"Humph! I know every street in town," equilibrium returned, and he went on to explain:

"I supposed you knew only two streets in town—Wells and South Water."

"Humph! I know every street in town," Droom resented, drawing himself up in his chair, and then blungrily, "What's happened?"

"Not so loud! Harbert's here, but"—"Oh! Here!"

"In Chicago, yes—we'll talk about it later."

The present genial environment and convivial atmosphere were producing a most inspiring effect on the lawyer.

The delightful consciousness that the people with whom his son was supping were of the smartest set in town for the moment had banished all fears of exposure.

From time to time he glanced proudly across to the alcove table where the men were engaged in unfolding their napkins and toying with their glasses, in lively anticipation of the enjoyment to come; while the women, with the hope of eliciting admiration for their hands and the sparkle of their rings, were taking off their gloves and spreading out their fingers on the tablecloth.

"Graydon seems to be right in the swim, eh, Droom?" he said. The irony of it all appeared strongly to his sense of humor. "I don't suppose you know those fellows?" he added patronizingly.

Droom was listening intently to the bursts of merriment which were enlivening the restaurant. Like a small boy at a circus who fears that something will happen that he will not see, he was continually turning his head and letting his eyes travel critically over the company at the neighboring table.

At this speech of Bansemers the eyes of the old clerk returned. They expressed no little resentment at the inference.

"Certainly I do," and, leaning over the table and covertly indicating with his long, bony finger the man at the head of the table, he answered succinctly, "That's Fernmore; he's—"

A particularly loud burst of laughter cut him short. At the adjoining tables conversation had abruptly ceased; heads were turned and inquisitive eyes were fastened on the brilliant coterie at the alcove table.

Few men in Chicago were better known or better liked than the stout, florid complexioned, jovial looking Billy Fernmore, the host of this entertainment. His social adventures and the headlong follies in which his fun loving proclivities invariably enmeshed him were only surpassed by his fondness for ridding himself of his unlimited wealth.

To his inherited five millions marriage had added the colossal fortune of a beautiful heiress, whose extravagances aggregated less than his own solely through the limitations of her sex. Yet, were it not for the self imposed handicap of adhering strictly to the somewhat old fashioned precept that jewels should be acquired only through affectionate beneficence, Mrs. Fernmore might have succeeded, in surpassing the princely prodigalities of her lord and master.

"It was this way," Billy was saying in his own inimitable manner and awake to the realization of having a "good one" to tell. "A few days ago the lady of my house took wings for New York—a little spree of her own, you understand. And for Billy Fernmore, I kept out of mischief for a time fairly well. After waiting days, lamblike, for her return, restlessness—and here Fernmore's shameless affectation of the neglected husband became so irresistibly funny that it provoked prolonged laughter from his listeners, even Droom showing his yellow snags and stretching his mouth to the fullest extent of the law as he joined in the general chorus—"restlessness gave way to recklessness, and in desperation I invited a half dozen of the oldest and most distinguished widowers in town to dine with me at the hotel, where they were informed they were to be honored by the presence of a bevy of the season's prettiest debutantes. My stars, but they were a fine collection of old innocents!" Fernmore threw himself back in his chair and roared at the recollection.

"Billy's a wonder when he's wound up!" Medford's whispered aside to the lady on his right met with a simple nod of the head; for, despite Miss Clegg's well feigned interest in Mr. Medford when Rigby was present, on other occasions there was no pretense of enjoyment of his society.

"Among those present—to use the correct phrase," said Billy, after having refreshed himself with sufficient champagne to proceed, "were two retired merchants, a venerable logician, a doddering banker and a half blind college professor. Of course I had to make some excuse for Mrs. Fernmore's absence. For the life of me I cannot now remember what yarn I told them, but they were anxious to be presented to the gay young women not to swallow it whole. The old boys

fairly swamped the girls with their sentimental attentions. It was a lively supper party—my word! And they were home unanimously declaring that the debutantes of the present day discomfited, at least in dash and go, the charmers of fifty years ago."

Amidst the confusion of peals of merriment which greeted the genial raconteur, Miss Cable, to whom the story did not especially appeal, whispered in awed tones:

"Graydon, who on earth is that queer, spectacular looking man with your father?"

"Oh, that's Droom—isn't he a character? He's been with the governor since I was a child. In those days his looks used to frighten me almost to death. I fancy he's had a sad life, don't you know?"

"There is something positively awful in his face," returned the girl, as her eyes faltered and dropped to her plate on unexpectedly meeting those of the subject of her remark.

"Sh-h!" came from Medford, and then, "Come, Billy—what's the point or the moral, as they say in novels?"

"Fernmore is a rattling good chap at heart," Graydon was saying to Jane, "but I can't stand that Med!"

"Yes, yes; go on, Mr. Fernmore," broke in several voices in eager expectancy.

"The moral?" Billy's eyes were twinkling. "The joke, rather, is on me. When Mrs. Fernmore reached home I thought it wise to say nothing about the affair, but I had completely underestimated the persistency of these rejuvenated venerables. They were not satisfied—wanted to know more about the girls, and the next day in deep but joyous simplicity half a dozen old men asked their married daughters and close friends at the clubs what family of Brown a certain debutante belonged to, who was the father of Miss Jones and how long had the family of Miss Robinson lived in the city, together with a lot of amazing questions. And failing to derive even the remotest satisfaction from the social register, the woman members of their families besieged my innocent wife with more or less shocked inquiries as to an entertainment of mine at which their aged relations were present. Well, the game was up! I owned up—confessed to the girls being actresses and begged for mercy."

"And I forgave him," supplemented Mrs. Fernmore smilingly. "Boys will be boys."

"Whew!" whistled Billy, in conclusion. "It was no end of a lark! I would not have missed it for the world; but the old chaps will never forgive me."

As the gentleman finished, Bansemers was looking at Droom with amusement. The old clerk was shaking his head in a manner that signified disapproval.

"How's that for doings in swaggar society, eh, Droom? If any one but Billy Fernmore had done that he would have been ostracized forever. Nothing like millions!"

"I don't believe true aristocrats would do that," interrupted Droom half angrily.

"These are the aristocrats—money aristocrats; the others have lost the name—forgotten. Come, let's go over yonder. We can talk there."

Bansemers called for the bill and settled it; then, slowly rising, ostentatiously waved his adieu to the alcove and deserted the scene for Chapin & Graydon. Droom meekly followed his employer.

For some time neither spoke. In their stall each was busy with his own thoughts and speculations.

"I think I've made a mess of it with Mrs. Cable," began Bansemers. "She"—"I wouldn't mention names," cautioned Droom, with a look at the top of the partition.

"She's very likely to fight back, after all."

"What was your demand?"

"Money," said Bansemers quietly. "Humph!" was Droom's way of saying he lied.

"Harbert has a purpose in coming here, Elias. We must prepare for him."

"We are as well prepared as we can expect to be. I guess it means that we'll have to get out of Chicago."

"Curse him!" snarled Bansemers. "I don't care a rap about myself, but it will be all up with Graydon if anything—unpleasant should happen to me," said Bansemers, with a wistful glance at his glass. Then in subdued tones he told of the meeting with Harbert. Droom agreed that the situation looked unpleasant, and all the more so in view of what Eddie Deever had mentioned in connection with the marshal's office. He repeated the story as it had come from the babbling youngster's lips, utterly deceived by the guileless emissary from the office downstairs.

"What do you expect to do?" he asked, studying the tense face of his employer.

"I'm going to stand my ground," said Bansemers, steadily drumming on the table with his stiff fingers. "They can't prove anything, and the man who makes a charge against me will have to substantiate it. I'll not run a step."

"Then," said Droom coarsely, "you must let Mrs. Cable alone. She is your danger signal. I tell you, Mr. Bansemers, she'll fight if you drive her into a corner. She's not a true aristocrat. She comes of a class that doesn't give up."

"Beh! She's like the rest. If Harbert doesn't get in his nasty work, she'll give in like all the others."

"I thought you said you'd do nothing to mar the happiness of Graydon," sneered Droom.

"I don't intend to, you old fool. This affair is between Mrs. Cable and me. If she wins, I'll give up. But understand me, I'm perfectly capable of knowing just when I'm beaten."

"I only know your financial valor," said Elias dryly.

"That's all you're expected to know, sir."

"Then we won't quarrel about it," said the other, with his sweetest grin. "Umph! Well, pleasanties aside, we must look ourselves over carefully before we see our New York friend. He must not find us with unclean lines. Elias, I'm worried, I'll confess, but I'm not afraid. Is there anything that we have bungled?"

"I have always been afraid of the chorus girl business. I don't like chorus girls." Bansemers at another time would have smiled.

It was past midnight when the two left the stall and started in separate ways for their north side homes. The master felt more secure than when he left the home of David Cable earlier in the night. Elias Droom said a parting:

"I don't like your attitude toward Mrs. C. It's not very manly to make war on a woman."

"My good Elias," said Bansemers complacently surveying himself in the small mirror across the stall, "all men make war on women one way or another."

He did not see Droom's ugly scowl as he preceded that worthy through the doorway.

The next morning Bansemers walked down the Drive. It was a bright, crisp day, and the snow had been swept from the sidewalks. He felt that a visit from Harbert during the day was not unlikely, and he wanted to be fresh and clear headed. Halfway down he met Jane Cable coming from the home of a friend. He never had seen her looking so beautiful, so full of the joy of living. Her friendly sparkling smile sent a momentary pang of shame into his calloused heart but it passed with the buoyant justification of his decision to do nothing in the end that might mar his son's happiness.

She was walking to town and as sured him that she rejoiced in his distinguished company. They discussed the play and the supper party.

"Now that I'm engaged to Graydon I'm positively beginning to grow sick of people," Miss Cable declared—and as they all declare at that age and stage.

"Well, you'll soon recover," he smiled. "Marriage is the convalescence of a love affair, you know."

"Oh, but most of the men one meets are so hopelessly silly—tiresome," she went on. "It's strange too. Nearly all of them have gone to college—Yale or Harvard."

"My dear Jane, they are the unfortunate sons of the rich. You can't blame them. All Yale and Harvard men are not tiresome. You should not forget that a large sprinkling of the young men you meet at the pink teas were sent to Yale or Harvard for the sole purpose of becoming Yale and Harvard men; nothing more. Their mothers never expected them to be anything else. The poor man sends his son to be educated; the rich man usually does it to get the boy away from home, so that he won't have to look at him all the time. I'm happy to say that I was quite poor when Graydon got his diploma."

"Oh, Graydon isn't at all like the others. He is a man!" cried Jane, her eyes dancing.

"I don't mean to say that all rich men's sons are failures. Some of them are really worth while. Give credit unlimited to the rich man's son who goes to college and succeeds in life in spite of his environment. I must not forget that Graydon's chief ambition at one time was to hunt Indians."

"He couldn't have got that from his mother," said she accusingly. Bansemers looked at her sharply. He had half expected on meeting her to observe the first sign that the Cable family had discussed him, well, but not favorably. Her very brightness convinced him that she at least had not been taken into the consultation.

"I am afraid it came from his horrid father. But Graydon is a good boy. He couldn't long follow the impulses of his father. I dare say he could be a sinner if he tried, too. I hate an imbecile. An imbecile, to my mind, is the fellow without the capacity to err intentionally. God takes care of the fellow who errs constantly. Give me the fellow who is bright enough to do the bad things which might admit him to purgatory in good standing, and I'll trust him to do the good things that will let him into heaven. I often wonder where these chaps go after they die—I mean the Yale and Harvard chaps who bore you. It takes a clever chap to have any standing at all in purgatory. Where do they go, Jane? You are wise for your years and sex. There surely must be a place for the plain asses."

"Oh," said she, "I suppose they have a separate heaven, just as the dogs have."

(Continued on page fourteen.)

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